



READING CONTENT REQUIREMENTS FOR CURRENT, FUTURE MARYLAND TEACHERS

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How will the regulatory changes affect Maryland teachers?

The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) was amended in 1998 to require all prospective and current Maryland teachers to take additional reading theory and methodology coursework for certification or recertification. Previously, the state had required early childhood and elementary school teaching candidates to take only one course in reading. Most middle and high school teachers were not required to take any reading courses.

Why are additional reading courses necessary?

Because reading is an essential skill across all content areas and all grade levels, every teacher is challenged to promote literacy. Lagging growth in eighth grade Maryland School Performance Assessment Program reading scores and poor performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test underscore our need to ensure that every teacher is equipped with the tools needed to diagnose reading problems and help students overcome this enormous obstacle to learning.

The reading coursework will provide formal training in such areas as language development, phonics, cognitive responses to reading, and analysis of student performance. The state works closely with the higher education community to ensure that the content is tailored to meet teachers' needs most effectively.

What courses will teachers have to take?

The State Task Force on Reading, formed in 1997, recommended 12 semester hours in the following content for regular and special education teachers at the early childhood and elementary levels:

1. **Processes and Acquisition of Reading**
Explains the process of language development, including the impact of phonemic awareness, and how the brain responds to reading acquisition.
2. **Instruction of Reading**
Shows teachers how to use a balanced program of phonics, semantics, and syntactics in teaching reading.
3. **Materials for Teaching Reading**
Exposes teachers to a variety of texts to be used in their classes and explains strategies for selecting and evaluating materials.
4. **Assessment for Reading Instruction**
Shows teachers how to use state, local, and classroom reading assessment data to make ongoing instructional modifications.

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What courses will teachers have to take?
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Six semester hours in the following content were recommended for regular and special education teachers at the secondary level and N-12 or K-12 levels:

1. **Methods of Teaching Reading in the Secondary Content Area, Part I**

Outlines the essentials of the reading process. Introduces teachers to the purposes of reading; methods of assessing student reading; cognitive strategies in reading; methods of incorporating reading through student-centered instruction; and motivations for reading.

2. **Methods of Teaching Reading in the Secondary Content Area, Part II**

Expands on Part I, enabling teachers to apply theories, strategies, and practices in daily classroom instruction.

Can these reading requirements be waived?

Local superintendents may request an exemption of these new requirements for certificated teachers who are at least 55 years old or who have been employed by public or approved nonpublic schools for at least 25 years.

The State Superintendent of Schools may also waive specific coursework requirements on an individual basis if he or she determines that the applicant's preparation or experience is adequate to justify the waiver.

Teachers must submit official documentation of the preparation or experience that will be used to satisfy the reading requirements, including approval of the request by the local superintendent.

Can teachers "test out" of the reading requirement?

Yes, early childhood, elementary, and special education teachers at the early childhood and elementary levels may test out by achieving the qualifying score of 173 on the Praxis II assessment *Reading Across the Curriculum: Elementary*. Educational Testing Service is currently developing a test for the secondary level. Check the ETS web site at www.teachingandlearning.org for testing information.

How long will teachers have to satisfy the requirements?

Current preservice teachers will be able to graduate by fulfilling the college or university program requirements under which they enrolled. Teachers will have to fulfill the additional reading coursework as part of the state's certification renewal requirements.

Current teachers will have at least a full certificate renewal period in which to complete the additional coursework. (Early childhood, elementary, and special education [birth-grade 3, grades 1-8] teachers will have at least two full renewal periods to satisfy all 12 semester hours.)

Students graduating from an out-of-state approved teacher preparation program and those last teaching out of state will not have to complete additional coursework prior to assuming teaching positions in Maryland. However, these teachers must satisfy the additional requirements to renew their certificates.